

Campaign Title: "Left Swipe Dat"

Brand: truth

Company(s) Involved: Truth Initiative, CommSight, Crux Research, GfK Research, Mindswarm, 72 and Sunny, Assembly

Category: Cross-Platform

Summary

The truth antismoking campaign needed a new strategy to achieve effective reach among its Gen Z audience across an increasingly fragmented media landscape. Research pointed to the mass appeal of music, the influence of social media music artists, and the potential of content to virally extend the campaign's message across platforms. To capitalize on these insights, truth created an original song and music video performed by social media artists which was launched across TV, social media, and radio. The video premiered on TV during the Grammy's in conjunction with social media promotion by the performing artists. The resultant "Left Swipe Dat" video has become a beloved piece of pop culture, with over 50M views and a twitter hashtag that trended worldwide.

Marketing Challenge

truth is a non-profit anti-smoking youth brand that launched to national prominence in the early 2000s with a mass media television campaign. Its mission is to achieve a culture where all youth and young adults reject tobacco. While investing resources in television advertisements on a few channels enabled massive reach and impact among our youth audience in the 2000s, the current media landscape is vastly different – and infinitely more fragmented – than that of the early 2000s. Not only have the number of TV channels exploded, but online and social media are ubiquitous, as are digital devices that enable constant access and media multitasking. In this noisy and fragmented media environment, how could we achieve the same level of reach and audience penetration of our Gen Z audience as we did in the early 2000s?

Methodology

We employed a multi-method approach to inform and evaluate our creative work, with pre-campaign market testing to develop strategy, and post-campaign evaluation to measure performance. This led to a campaign that was thoroughly researched, data driven, and supported.

First, we conducted exploratory research of youth and young adult media use that revealed critical insights enabling us to both reach and ultimately impact the attitudes of our target audience. This research indicated that to capture Gen Z's attention and get them to share our message with their peers – a key criterion for achieving reach in today's fragmented media landscape – we needed to create more than just an advertisement. We needed to create actual engaging and shareable content that integrated our message while holding entertainment value for youth.

Next, to test receptivity to concepts that incorporated this idea of integrating our message into creative content, we conducted qualitative research in the form of video interviews via an online mobile video survey research platform. We interviewed a racially diverse sample of youth and young adults, who varied in their smoking status (nonsmokers, those open to smoking, and smokers). We also conducted a thorough and extensive environmental scan to determine what content and which influencers would likely resonate with our audience. This research pointed to music content as being one of the most engaging and highly shareable types of content in the current media environment. Our research also indicated that the biggest names on the Internet (specifically on social channels such as YouTube and Vine) had become the influential 'friends' of millions of youth: a 2014 Variety magazine study revealed that 5 out of the 10 most influential people among Americans ages 13-18 were YouTube content creators.

Lastly, we discovered that despite having made large strides in de-normalizing smoking behavior in culture, youth are posting smoking selfies on social media and online dating profiles at an alarming rate. These images hold power. They glamorize smoking by reinforcing a long-time cultural perception that smoking makes you look cool, and most importantly, attractive.

Creative Execution

Armed with knowledge about the appeal of music content and social media influencers, we decided to create an original song and music video that would be co-created and distributed by top up-and-coming internet influencers like Grace Helbig (2.1M YouTube subscribers), King Bach (11.4M Vine subscribers), and 5th Harmony (1.2M YouTube subscribers).

Additionally, we capitalized upon the fragmented media landscape by employing a cross-platform strategy that would take advantage of a huge television event that aligned with our content – the Grammys, music's biggest night of the year – while also promoting and sharing the content through both paid social and truth's owned YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter channels as well as VEVO channels for all the influencers that participated in our music video. Having these influencers at the core of our campaign was integral to authentically and instantaneously connecting with our audience while broadening our reach to our target audience.

We took it one step further, by taking full advantage of the fact that the new media landscape enables user generated content, we gave our audience a way to participate by creating their own videos. We challenged young people to get involved in the conversation by posting their own Lip Sync versions of our music video on their social channels. After collecting submissions, we released a super-cut of the "Left Swipe Dat" video that featured a collection of teens alongside their favorite Youtube Creators.

To de-glamorize smoking selfies and smoking in online dating profiles, we co-opted the phrase "Left Swipe" which already existed in youth vernacular as a synonym for "rejection" and put our own twist on it, associating it with the rejection of smoking behavior in the digital space and in an online dating context. Through our media partners (as well as organic shares), our intent was to integrate the phrase "Left Swipe Dat" into the pop culture vernacular.

Left Swipe Dat:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDVVQDN6OECnHMmeqNaBI2Co5w5fZaMaW>

Business Results

Left Swipe Dat crossed over from a TV ad to an online video that has become a beloved piece of pop culture. The video has become a new phrase for rejecting smoking behavior among today's youth, and "Left Swipe Dat" was immortalized as youth vernacular by appearing organically in Urban Dictionary.

Pre-Market Testing of "Left Swipe Dat" Confirmed Ad Effectiveness

Left Swipe was one of our most motivational ads in inspiring respondents to agree that they would be part of a social movement to end smoking. It surpassed expectations on feeling modern/current, being for young people and capturing attention. The #LeftSwipeDat hashtag was recalled by two-thirds of viewers

Social Media and Earned Media Demonstrated Astronomical Reach

"Left Swipe Dat" stole the show at The Grammys and beat our last social media record out of the water! The music video was viewed over 50 million times, 2.9M of which were organic views. During the Grammy's #LeftSwipeDat was the #1 Worldwide Twitter Trending Topic twice and was the #1 Twitter Trending Topic 3 times in the U.S. It beat out #Grammys. The campaign also beat previous truth metrics on campaign mentions on social media.

Significant Changes in KPIs Demonstrate Powerful Impact

As with all of our ads or content, truth aims to change attitudes toward tobacco so that we can change intention to smoke and ultimately smoking behavior. We employed two methods to measure changes in attitudes about tobacco: a continuous media tracking study that surveys 140 new respondents per week, and a nationally representative longitudinal cohort study that interviews over 10,000 target audience participants every 6 months on truth, tobacco attitudes and use. Our truth® continuous media tracking study and our truth longitudinal cohort demonstrated significant changes in awareness and campaign related attitudes throughout the course of our campaign.